

Hussein. There was never any disagreement in this Chamber on the evil he represented and we all applaud our troops for bringing him to justice. They did the job they were asked to do and more.

But I pause on supporting this resolution on two counts. This war has not brought greater stability to the area. It has not enhanced America's leadership position or created stronger alliances. While our soldiers have fought with honor—even as we speak here—the administration failed to support their efforts with a plan to win the peace, bring stability or share the burden and risk. We still wait for the President to speak honestly with the American people about the failed intelligence estimates and the reasons for the rush to war. America remains isolated, which is itself a risk to our security and our troops.

This resolution is silent on these questions and the leadership will not allow them to be addressed.

There is no commitment to ensuring that our troops have the best protection equipment available, no commitment to getting wounded troops the best health care as quickly as possible. There is no mention of the heroic contributions our reserve troops have provided or the very serious challenges that lie ahead in Iraq. Any resolution honoring and supporting our troops would express these sentiments.

What I find most egregious is that at the very moment we debate this resolution, the Budget Committee is considering a budget that omits funding for many of our most pressing priorities in Iraq. During consideration of this budget, the majority has turned aside efforts to increase our commitment to health care for reservists, for military housing programs and to educate military schoolchildren. At a time when we have families of troops searching the Internet to buy body armor for their loved ones in Iraq because this Congress has failed to provide it for them, that is the very least we should be doing for these brave men and women. Had Democrats been allowed the elemental rights of a minority, we would have incorporated language that made clear Congress's first obligation was to provide our troops in Iraq with the security and the best equipment available.

To be frank, the hypocrisy of this Congress in offering this resolution but not the actual support, tempts me to fight back and protest on behalf of our men and women in Iraq and in the reserves.

But stronger in my heart is an appreciation for our troops that keep us free. I cast my vote for those words in the resolution and express my personal exception to the majority's maneuvering that has diminished their resolution and our work.

Fortunately, we will have more opportunities to express our views about our postwar policy in Iraq and failure to genuinely support our military and veterans.

"A RUN FOR THEIR SON"

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 22, 2004

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, we talk here often about family values, with good reason, because defending the family is

one of the most important parts of our job. One way to do that is to give truly inspirational examples of how families have pulled together, especially in those very difficult, tragic times when awful events befall good people.

One such inspirational example was recently chronicled in the New Bedford Standard Times, describing the determination of Elsie and Tony Souza, of New Bedford to compete in a marathon to honor the memory of their son Christopher, who was tragically taken from them ten years ago at the age of twenty-six. I had the privilege of knowing Christopher, as I have the privilege of knowing and working with Tony and Elsie Souza. Tony is the Executive Director of the Waterfront Historic Area League, an extremely important, innovative and effective organization working to advance the cultural and—therefore—economic—fortunes of New Bedford. Elsie has been since 1993 the Deputy Director of my Massachusetts operation, based in my New Bedford office.

This excellent article by Don Cuddy in the New Bedford Standard Times gives a sense of these wonderful people and of the extent to which they truly exemplify family values, and I ask that the article be printed here.

[From the New Bedford Standard Times,
Mar. 19, 2004]

A RUN FOR THEIR SON (By Don Cuddy)

NEW BEDFORD.—“Tony! It’s a quarter to five.” Tony took an eight count.

It was another black, freezing, January morning and the mercury was not moving. Neither was the city. There were no cars on Route 18, the waterfront was deserted and the shops on Union Street had been locked down and abandoned.

The cobbled streets of the historic district were deathly still until the door on Center Street creaked open. Just as they had for months, two shadowy figures emerged from within and began to run silently through the darkness.

Up the hill to frigid Buttonwood Park they labored side by side, then around to Hawthorne Street onto Slocum Road and back downtown as the first streaks of light became visible in the eastern sky.

Beginning with a promise in the fall and undeterred by the worst winter in years, Tony and Elsie Souza have held faithfully to their training program as they move ever closer to their goal of completing this year’s New Bedford Half-Marathon.

There will be some mixed emotions when they step to the starting line Sunday and take their places with the other runners. This year marks the 10th anniversary of their only son’s passing. The need arose to find something to mark the occasion and it was Elsie’s idea that they should run the race.

Christopher Jon Souza had a bright future until he was fatally stricken with cancer at the age of 26.

After obtaining a degree in Russian language and literature from Syracuse University, he worked for Sen. Ted Kennedy in Washington before moving to Boston in 1994 to complete his master’s degree. Always athletic, he was training for the Boston Marathon in March of that year when he began to experience breathing difficulties. He saw a doctor and was told he had a sinus infection.

In fact, he had a tumor in his chest, an offshoot of testicular cancer. When he came home to New Bedford in July at his mother’s urging, he was finally given a chest x-ray. Three weeks later he was in a coma. The end came in November.

“There was no warning at all,” Tony said. “After they took the chest x-ray I went to the doctor’s office on a Saturday morning and, I’ll never forget, he said ‘I think you better sit down.’” Within five days their son was on life-support. Christopher underwent chemotherapy while in a coma. When he came out of it, for a very short time it appeared that he might have beaten the odds. But it was not to be.

In tribute to his memory the New Bedford couple have committed to running the race and, because of their enduring love for their child and of New Bedford, they have also offered trophy and a cash prize in Christopher’s name. The first city residents, male and female, to cross the finish line this year will receive the Christopher Jon Souza Award and \$250.

“Chris loved sports and he was a great runner, so last fall I just decided that I was going to run it,” Elsie said. “To convince Tony. I said, ‘We’re going to do this for Chris.’ So every day I get up at 4 a.m. and read the paper before we go. He hopes there’s a snowstorm outside and prays that I’ll go back to bed.”

Tony laughed. “She has all her clothes laid out the night before, too,” he said.

“I used to run. I ran the Ocean State Marathon, and in ‘91 I did the Marine Corps Marathon in D.C. with Chris. I was 48 and he was 24. He was very competitive, just like Elsie. She won’t let me pass her.”

“But after he died I just quit. Before he passed I promised Chris I’d get back and it’s been 10 years, so I was saying to myself: ‘I guess you broke your promise.’ I’d put on so much weight but I went on a diet and now I’ve lost 27 pounds. It wasn’t easy. I got frostbite on my legs and hands in January and it’s just healing up now. We’ve been through everything but last Saturday we did 10 miles. We’re ready.”

For Elsie it was even tougher. She had never been a runner and suffered bouts of asthma as a child that confined her to bed much of the winter, but they never contemplated quitting. Their loss has strengthened them. They have stayed together through the training and intend to do the same on Sunday.

Once they had committed to entering the race, the idea of adding the award came naturally.

“As parents, losing an only child has been very difficult,” Tony said. “We’ve forged on, I think bravely, but they are always with you and you don’t want them to go away, so anything we can do to memorialize him we do.”

The Souzas have also established a scholarship fund in their son’s memory.

“We love New Bedford and we believe that this race exemplifies all the good things about this community,” Elsie said. “The people who put it together are doing it against all odds.”

In recognition of that the Souzas decided to make their own contribution.

“People here work so hard to try to make things better and we suffer so needlessly from a bad reputation,” Tony said. “When you see all these runners coming down here it shows we are doing something right.”

Tony and Elsie Souza have already endured the greatest loss a parent can. Nevertheless the race poses a challenge in and of itself.

“We’re not fast but we’ll do it” Tony said, looking at his wife for confirmation. Elsie had her own concerns.

“My biggest challenge right now is deciding what I am going to wear! Only a woman would understand that.”

RELATING TO THE LIBERATION OF
THE IRAQI PEOPLE AND THE
VALIANT SERVICE OF THE
UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES
AND COALITION FORCES

SPEECH OF

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this very flawed, very inadequate and blatantly political resolution.

Every Member of this House wants to honor our troops. That view is truly non-partisan. Each of us is deeply grateful for the patriotism and courage our troops have exhibited in Iraq, and for the sacrifices that they and their families are making. But House Republican leaders should be ashamed of themselves for playing politics and trying to score political points by pushing this partisan resolution through the House, and using the brave men and women in our armed forces as cover in order to do it.

This resolution does not even mention the thousands of wounded soldiers from this war, many of whom I met at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, DC. Their sacrifices will not end when they come home and leave the military. For those who lost limbs or suffered other serious, debilitating injuries, their sacrifice will be with them for the rest of their lives. That is certainly true for the parents, brothers and sisters, spouses, children and friends of the 564 Americans who have lost their lives so far in this Iraq War.

They clearly deserve our recognition and our gratitude, but they are not mentioned in this resolution.

Republican leaders are so single-minded and so dead-set on justifying the President's decision to go to war that they use the opportunity to honor our troops as an excuse to explain away the war. And they purposely excluded Democrats in the drafting process so that they could have it their way, and their way alone. Their failure to reach across the aisle and make this resolution bipartisan is wrong and disgraces the memory of those who serve, and those who have sacrificed, and those who have died.

As written, this resolution states that the "United States and the world have been made

safer by the removal of Saddam Hussein and the Baath party from power". There is certainly not unanimity on that point. The Bush administration has tried hard to change the reasons the President took this country to war. We were told that Saddam Hussein was hand-in-hand with Al Qaeda; that he was constructing weapons of mass destruction; and that he had a program to create nuclear weapons. We were led to believe that Iraq was arming itself to attack us—and to attack us imminently.

But now little of what they told us appears to be true. It now appears that the President's rationale for war in Iraq was fundamentally and deeply flawed. Judging from the 27 people killed in a car bombing in Baghdad this afternoon or the 200 people killed in Madrid only 6 days ago, it appears that the undisputed enemy that all Americans recognize, Al Qaeda, is as strong as ever. No weapons of mass destruction have been found. The sober warnings from the President about an Iraqi nuclear program were exaggerated and based on discredited and unverified reports.

So, while every Member of Congress is glad that Saddam Hussein is no longer in power and no longer a menace to the people of Iraq, it is certainly not clear that removing Saddam Hussein has made the United States any safer, or that it was worth the terrible cost of 564 American lives, thousands of Americans wounded, and over \$150 billion—so far.

It seems to me that, if the Republican leadership really wanted to salute the troops involved in this year-old war, they would join with Democrats to draft a resolution of praise and honor that every Member would support. Even more fitting would be an immediate vote on legislation to ensure that all of our troops are properly armed and outfitted, and that they and their families will be taken care of. The President's budget request shortchanges our troops and the generations of American soldiers before them.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I will vote against this resolution. We must support our troops with action, not with political rhetoric.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT AARON
SCHARF

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 22, 2004

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I pay tribute today to the life of Sergeant Aaron Scharf. Aaron recently passed away at the age of 33 and left an incredible legacy of community work and innovation in his chosen profession. He was not only dedicated to improving his community but also to fulfilling his responsibilities as husband, father, son, and friend. It gives me no greater pleasure than honoring his memory today.

To all those who knew Aaron, he was energetic, determined, and purposeful. He consistently exhibited generosity of spirit, love for his fellow man, and dedication to his work. He was never afraid to challenge the status quo in his own humble and unassuming manner. These qualities undoubtedly left an immeasurable impression on his friends, family, and co-workers.

Graduating from Chaffey High School in 1988, Aaron already knew his calling. The son of a police officer, he joined the Fontana Police Department in 1989 and graduated from the Police Academy in March of 1991. His special details throughout the years included the Narcotics Unit, Gang Unit, Drug Enforcement Task Force, the FBI Gang Task Force, and Special Enforcement Detail. Aaron was a truly special man. He provided an incredible service for those he loved with no thought of additional compensation.

Throughout his time serving for the Fontana Police Department, Aaron exhibited tremendous passion, pride, and a deep resolve to fight for the people of the Inland Empire. He was a beloved part of his family and a respected member of his community. His kind and passionate spirit was an incredible resource and blessing to those who knew him.

I join today with family and friends in paying my respects to Sergeant Aaron Scharf, beloved husband, father, and friend. He is survived by his wife, Shana, and his daughters, Amanda, Ryan, and Camryn. He was a generous and gentle man who fought for what he believed in. He will be deeply missed by all.